

CQ CONGRESSIONAL TRANSCRIPTS
Congressional Hearings
March 25, 2009

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense Holds Hearing on the President's Proposed Fiscal 2010 Budget for National Guard and Reserve

LIST OF PANEL MEMBERS AND WITNESSES

INOUE:

This morning the subcommittee meets to receive testimony on the status of the National Guard and Reserve components.

From the National Guard, we are pleased to have the vice chief of the Army National Guard, General Clyde Vaughn and the vice chief of the Air National Guard General Henry Wyatt.

And before I proceed, I would like to apologize for this brief lateness, but the traffic is, as always, terrible.

And from the Reserve we welcome the chief of the Army Reserve General Jack Stultz, Chief of the Naval Reserve Admiral Dirk Debbink, Commander of the Marine Forces Reserve General John Bergman, and the Chief of the Air Force Reserve General Charles Stenner.

And we're very pleased to have you here today and look forward to working with you in the coming years in support of our Guardsmen and our Reservists.

And the committee is sorry that General McKinley was not able to be here today with us, but we thank him for submitting written testimony for the record.

This hearing will be unlike prior years in that we have not received the F.Y. 2010 budget, nor the fiscal year 2009 supplemental request.

For this reason, many members of the committee may wish to submit additional questions after we receive the budget request later this spring. And we ask for a timely

response to these questions.

Gentlemen, the National Guard and Reserve components have maintained a high operational tempo for over six years in support of the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Through the admirable service of thousands of Guardsmen and Reservists, the Reserve components have provided essential combat logistics and other support capabilities to these operations.

However, the strain of these deployments is beginning to show. Suicide and divorce rates, for example, are on the rise, unfortunately.

We must make certain that we are doing everything we can to provide our servicemembers the support they need during and after deployment.

Reintegrating after deployment can be particularly difficult for Guardsmen and Reservists who lack the support network provided at an active-duty installation.

For this reason, reintegration programs are important in helping our Guardsmen and Reservists transition back to civilian life.

Despite providing additional resources for these programs in the last year's supplemental funding bill, a department-wide approach to reintegration activities has been very slow to develop.

And our committee hopes that the department will work quickly to create an effective program that fits the needs of our returning service members without using a one-size-fits-all for all of the Reserve components. What works for the Army may not work for the Navy Reserve.

It is a testament to the dedication and patriotism of our Guardsmen and Reservists that retention levels remain strong despite the strain of frequent deployments.

Recruiting has also continued to improve for all Reserve components. In fact, for the first time in several years, all of the Reserve components are consistently achieving their recruiting goals.

However, as we all agree, challenges remain. Many of the Reserve components are increasing their end-strength, which will require continued focus on recruiting and retention, particularly for high- demand specialties.

And as the active components continue to grow, it will be increasingly difficult for the

Reserve components to attract prior service candidates.

Therefore, we much continue to provide sufficient resources to attract and retain high-quality personnel.

The success of the Guard and Reserve components would also not be possible without the support of our Reserve employers. Employers must fill the holes left by deployed Reservists who are sometimes on their second deployment in only a few years' time.

The strain has become even greater during the current economic recession, and I look forward to hearing what is being done to make certain that we continue to have the support of our business community in hiring and supporting our Reservists.

The committee is pleased to see that equipment shortages continue to be reduced, although we know significant shortfalls still remain.

It's important that the department continues to focus on equipping the Reserve components by requesting sufficient funding in annual budget submissions and prioritizing the fielding of equipment to the Reserve components.

We must make certain that the Guard and Reserves have the equipment they need for training and operations at home and abroad.

I look forward to hearing your perspective on these issues and your recommendations for strengthening our forces during this most demanding time.

And I thank you for your testimony this morning, and may I assure that your full statements will be made part of the record.

We will begin our hearings with a panel of the National Guard, but, first, I'd like to turn to my distinguished vice chairman, Senator Cochran of Mississippi, for any remarks he may wish to make.

COCHRAN:

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I'm pleased to join you in welcoming the leaders of our National Guard and Reserve components to today's hearing.

Today's citizen soldiers, sailors, airman, and marines are an indispensable and operational reserve. The days of the weekend warrior are history. These everyday people balance a day job, family interests, and are now volunteering for deployments,

humanitarian missions, and non-service traditional assignments around the globe.

When they aren't supporting operational needs of combatant commanders, they stand ready to assist in dealing with natural disasters here at home.

We appreciate the service that you provide our nation. Thank you very much. We look forward to your testimony.

INOUE:

And now may I call upon the man who's in charge of the Guard, General Vaughn?

VAUGHN:

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, it's a privilege to be here with you.

As you stated, we turned in our statements for the record, and so I'll be very brief, and I look forward to answering the questions.

The first thing I'd like to do is to introduce to this subcommittee a great non-commissioned officer. He happens to be the non-commissioned officer of the year for the entire 1.1 million-men- and-woman-Army.

He is a National Guardsman from Montana, and his name is Sergeant Michael Noyce Merino, and he's got his wife with him, Shelli.

(APPLAUSE)

We -- of course, we talk very emotionally about what a close-knit family we are, you know, the Guard and Reserve, and that's where our strengths come from, from our communities.

And so today, as we were having a discussion in my office before we started over here, of course I asked the typical question, "Where's everybody from?" you know, and what not.

Shelli's mother and I grew up in the same 4,000-person town, in Dexter, Missouri.

And, Senator Bond, I'm sure you know I'm going to tell him that deal, too -- unbelievable, sometimes.

We really, really appreciate what you've done. You know, we look to your leadership with the National Guard and Reserve on appropriations. We know what's been done there. We know the money that you put in there, especially for the full-time support piece.

Your confidence in us has been well-justified. You know, we're the strongest Army National Guard, right now, of all time, and we're making progress every day. And we're ready to do whatever the state and the nation asks us to do, and it's because of your great support that's made that possible.

A couple of things. As you know, just like you said, the '10 budget is not here. And so when it comes, we just ask for your help, and, again, just like you've always given us, in doing the right thing.

Please take a look at the CSTs, a critical element in our organizations, you know, and make sure that they're sufficiently taken care of.

The last thing is, it's probably my last time to appear before this subcommittee, and I am just - it's been a privilege and an honor to come over here and testify, something that, of course, I will always cherish and remember. So thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

INOUE:

General Wyatt?

WYATT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, Senator Leahy.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today and allowing me to testify on behalf of the men and women of the Air National Guard, authorized end-strength of 106,756 (inaudible) airmen nationwide. And for the first time since 2002, our end-strength is approaching 108,500.

As we meet today, your Air National Guard is protecting the skies of the United States of America at 16 of the 18 air sovereignty alert sites covering the United States of America.

We're forward-deployed in over 3,300 locations in our states. Our airmen are

responding to disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, and fires, and currently today we have airmen deployed in South Dakota and Minnesota, fighting the floods in that region and snow storms in Montana.

Our airmen continue to volunteer at unprecedented rates to support the worldwide contingencies. And we can't forget the backbone of our force, the traditional Guard members who provide the efficiencies and the surge capacity that makes the Air National Guard a valued member of the defense.

Three primary themes -- three primary concerns as we appear before you today. The first is modernizing and recapitalizing the aging fleet of aircraft to bridge the gap in midterm Air Force capability.

Secondly, we intend to leverage the inherent ANG efficiencies that I mentioned before and take on additional Air Force missions as appropriate.

And we seek to maximize the use of associations of several different kinds, but the association construct and community basing to better support the Air Force mission.

I stand ready to answer your questions, sir. Thank you.

INOUE:

Thank you very much, General.

If I may, I would like to call upon General Vaughn first. The Army Guard is currently at 366,500 end-strength. This is 13,900 more than authorized and exceeds the entire end-strength growth planned for the Guard.

Can you tell us why the Guard has exceeded the authorized strength so significantly?

And how do you plan to pay for these additional Guardsmen?

VAUGHN:

Thank you, Chairman.

Number one, as you know, a couple of years ago we were sitting here tremendously under-strength, and there were a lot of doubting Thomases that we could make end-strength. And we did that, put together a great program. The states worked it hard,

tremendous pride in our forces throughout the nation.

The authorized -- the authorization for us and the money for the Army National Guard in the supplemental is at 358,200. In face we are actually -- you know, this thing continues to climb in spite of putting the levers in place to stop it. And we're 10,000 over that.

Next year, to grow the Army piece, we were supposed to be at 358,200. The statutory appropriations, as you outlined, it is exactly on the mark, \$352,600.

You know, and that -- so, long story short, we have to come out of 10,000 soldiers between now and the end of the year to get to the authorized level.

We will do that. And the way we will do that is that we will change our system.

We had an albatross of a system. We had a dinosaur of a system. We take youngsters in that want to be in our formations and swear them in on the first day. And then they sit in our formations for a long time before they ship off to basic training.

So, in order to overcome that, and to keep from cross-leveling like we had to do, we over-drove our end-strength with a goal toward correcting that deficiency and pulling it down by the end of the fiscal year, and at the same time growing readiness.

We have a plan in place. I've briefed it to General McKinley, and there are three phases to this plan. And we have been discussing that with the staff members, and we've discussed it with the Army. And the Army is confident in what we're going to do.

But our eye is on readiness, and I will assure that we will be at a level where we have been authorized to be at the end of the year.

INOUE:

I can assure you that the committee and I support you on this, but, just for the record, we wanted your explanation, sir.

If I may ask, General Wyatt, the Air Guard has announced plans to grow by 7,000 in fiscal 2010. Active-duty Air Force and Reserve announced similar plans last year to grow their end-strength levels. They argued that these increases were necessary to restore cuts.

The Guard was not part of reductions, so why are these additional personnel required?

WYATT:

Mr. Chairman, you are correct in that the Air National Guard did not take personnel cuts when we were asked to respond to the (inaudible) previously. We took those cuts in flying hours, took a little risk in their flying hour program.

To answer your question, sir, if we take a look at the missions right now that the Air Force has asked the Air National Guard to perform, current authorized end-strength of 106,756 -- if we look at the validated manpower requirement for those missions which we currently have accepted from the Air Force, we would need 2,228 additional military positions to fully man the missions that the Air Force has assigned the Air National Guard.

We also have a need to populate our joint force headquarters, which is really the tool that the Adjutant General used to execute the missions for the governors, but also to assist in our mobilization and deployments for the federal war fight, and so administer a lot of the airmen care programs that you mentioned in your opening comments.

We also understand that the appetite for Air Force capability exceeds the authorizations at this point for manpower. We're poised with our current upward vector in recruiting. We're poised to answer the call should the Air Force need our assistance in manning some of these additional responsibilities, if, again, our senior leaders determine that the Air National Guard should play a part in that.

So we stand ready to answer that call, and those are the reason why we would be looking at a possible increase in manpower if the Air Force would so request.

INOUE:

General, I thank you for your leadership. I think you're on the right track.

General Vaughn, if I recall, in F.Y. 2006 you were at just about 40 percent of your equipment needs, and now you're over 75 percent. How has this affected readiness?

VAUGHN:

Mr. Chairman, it affects it in a significant way, and the actions, again, that this subcommittee has taken has enabled us to have the kind of world-class capability that we have today.

The Army is making good on the promises. I have to tell you that, with the pressure that's been on this particular issue, and the amount of money in it is a substantial amount of money, and our view of this is that we're getting better every day at equipping.

You know, the thing about the Guard, unlike the other Reserve components back here, it's all about people. And we're moving so fast to having a great personnel readiness force that it deserves to have its equipment.

It's not a hollow force anymore. At one time that was true. But this 75 percent or 76 percent across the board right now -- you know there's a lot of turbulence, and there's equipment that's been left behind and so forth and so on. We're not crying over that.

The fact of it is that we are now seeing equipment delivered. After we got into this thing in 2006, we are now seeing in 2008 and will see more of it in 2009. We are seeing delivered into our force, and what it does for readiness. And the short answer is substantial.

INOUE:

Thank you very much.

I believe you made a statement saying that about 85 percent of your F-16s will reach the end for their lives in about eight years. What are you doing to meet this shortfall?

WYATT:

Thank you very much, Chairman Inouye, for your question.

That's one of the primary concerns that I have, the recapitalization of the Air National Guard. It's not just a problem that the Air National Guard faces. It's an issue that the entire Air Force faces, active-duty, Guard and Reserve.

A large percentage of the Air Force F-16 fleet resides within the Air National Guard, and the Air National Guard, because of that fact, and because of the aging aircraft, is the component of the Air Force that faces the most risk for any delays in recapitalization of the United States Air Force.

If you take a look at the air sovereignty alert locations that I mentioned in my opening statement, those 16 ASA air sovereignty alert sites that the Air National Guard mans, 11 of those are manned by F-16 units -- F15 unites in the Air National Guard.

Because of the service life of our jets, we face the very real projection of losing 80 percent of those beginning in 2010 out through the next eight years.

That would take the number of F-16 wings, squadron equivalents, if you would, in the Air National Guard from about 19 down to about four.

It's a very serious problem that we have. We're working with the United States Air Force as they address their recapitalization issues. And we have received great support from Air Combat Command.

But those are some decisions, as far as the degree of recapitalization, what type of platforms we're talking about, how many, that, obviously, will be answered by our nation's leaders, a lot higher grade than I am.

But we stand ready to work with the United States Air Force.

I've likened our position to flying post formation with the Air Force, but doing so cautiously, because we know there are fiscal pressures to recapitalization entirely in fifth-generation fighters.

And we are preserving our options depending upon the decisions that are made by our national leaders, but also by the United States Air Force as they address the issue of recapitalizing not only their own fleet, but our fleet.

Talking about F-22s, obviously, depending upon what happens with the F-22 decision, we, the Air National Guard, need to be a part of that if there is acquisition, additional acquisitions of F-22s.

Our position is that the number one mission, and the one that the Air National Guard is most involved in, is the air sovereignty alert. And we feel that those -- the best airplane in the world needs to be -- needs to be defending the best country in the world.

F-35 -- obviously, the question is when, and how many. Regardless of the number, we need to be with our United States Air Force and Air Force Reserve brothers and sisters in a proportional and concurrent fielding of that platform.

But it also goes to any other platforms that may be acquired depending upon the fiscal situation. We need to be concurrently and proportionately fielded with the United States Air Force.

INOUE:

General, we're all sensitive to what is happening in our economy, but I believe I speak for the committee when I say we'll do our very best to make sure that replacements for your fighter units will be available in the funding.

WYATT:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

INOUE:

Senator Cochran?

COCHRAN:

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

General Vaughn, over the past few years new programs have been implemented to assess the health condition of soldiers after they've been deployed overseas. In particular, attention is being placed, I think, in the review of the Guard forces.

With a large number of Guardsmen and many women who have been deployed or alerted for deployment, many of them are in state -- as you know, I'm concerned about this ability to provide a continuum of medical care and attention for those who need to have their medial situation addressed.

Could you give us a reaction of whether or not there's been similar reactions to the stresses of deployments in the Guard and Reserve forces as there have been with regular active-duty forces?

And how is the Bureau working with the Department of Defense to deal with this challenge?

VAUGHN:

Mr. Vice Chairman, there have been similar -- there have been similar things happen to our soldiers. I mean, we're not, whether they're active-duty soldiers or Guard soldiers that

come back to transition into the, back in the civilian world, then several things happen.

The Chairman mentioned, for instance, suicides. Our suicide rate is up in alarming fashion. I mean, we're probably about -- if we look at where it's been over the last couple of years.

Now, this is on active duty, and this is off active duty. And, by the way, the great majority of them are off active duty when they come back.

Now, at the same time, a substantial number, the greatest number, have never deployed.

So you're looking at friction across the whole system in the United States of America. Suicides are about 140 percent to 150 percent rate right now in the Army Guard.

We are, you know, attacking this along with the United States Army. General Chiarelli has been over and testified. We're (inaudible) in that.

You know, the yellow ribbon integration piece that the Chairman talked about, you know, on the front end, we're engaged in that to the inth degree.

We think we have helped lead the way in something called a blast tracker for those soldiers that were involved in events down-range, explosive events, and they weren't hurt substantially enough, and nowhere does it appear on the record. We're involved in that.

The sidebar question, are we getting better medically. I think we are. You know, I think a number of the programs that are out there -- last year in 2008, 92 percent of our soldiers went to the (inaudible) station in good shape. That's a record. We're better at that.

There is a program I think we need to take our non-deployables and fix them, you know, before they go. I mean, if you had car, you put the right repair part on and fix them.

And where do you fix them?

Do you fix them a year out?

That's probably a pretty good tack to take on that.

But I think that, overall, and what you champion is exactly right. We don't need to have two or three levels of citizens, who are wonderful citizens that we have, you know, defending us and doing the things we ask for.

And so everything we can do, in terms of health care and getting this right for this country, we've got to do.

I've rambled around on several things, and I think that you were getting at two or three of those things, you know, when you asked that question. So thanks for that question.

COCHRAN:

General Wyatt, what's your reaction to that question?

WYATT:

We share the same concerns that General Vaughn does. If we look at our statistics, we pretty much mirror the United States Air Force in our experience rate as far as suicides.

Our difficulty is, until recently, we've had difficulty tracking the off-duty suicides because we have no legal authority to compel investigators to get into the cause of a particular death. You can't tell in an automobile accident, for example, if it's accidental or intentional.

So we have those problems that we're working through.

But because of the close relationships that the Air National Guard has with the local communities, we feel pretty confident that our data is correct.

We have similar programs that the Air National -- I mean that the Army National Guard has. We're taking steps through General McKinley's leadership, the National Guard Bureau, to integrate our activities with the Army National Guard so that our COCOMs in the states, our adjutants general, when they administer these programs to Guardsmen, whether it be Army or Air, that they efficiently maximize the use of the resources available to them.

I think what we've got to remember is that the adjutant general, on their own -- and having been one, I've been there, and I know that the adjutants general go to great lengths in working with their state's resources provided by their governors to help facilitate some of the federal programs.

And a lot of the work that's being done at the joint force headquarters -- I mentioned the need earlier for Air National Guard infusion and manpower into our joint force headquarters.

That would help us facilitate a couple of things, not only working with the Army National Guard to make our programs more joint and more efficient, but also emerging the capabilities that they adjutants general bring in through state health departments, mental health programs that may be available in the states.

And there are some great private programs out there, too, that the adjutants general know about.

The key is that one size does not fit all, as the Chairman indicated, on some of our programs.

We need to allow flexibility to the adjutants general, because the needs vary from state to state, the programs vary in their availability from state to state.

COCHRAN:

General Wyatt, our committee has provided funding for purchasing the Air Force joint cargo aircraft, and I wonder if you could tell us what your reaction is to the need for the Air National Guard for this aircraft and whether or not we have funding that's available for you to begin meeting that new requirement?

WYATT:

Senator Cochran, thanks for the question.

That airplane is critical to the Air National Guard, not just because it addresses some of the states that lost flying missions because of BRAC, but because of the capability that it provides the United States Air Force and the joint war fighter.

To answer your questions about is there a funding stream sufficient to acquire the airplane based upon the data from last year, I don't believe so. That's one of the acquisitions that I'll be talking to the United States Air Force about.

The need for the airplane, I believe, is there. The way that the airplane has operated differs a little bit between the Air Force and the United States Army, but I think, if you talk to the leadership in the United States Air Force, they will tell you that they recognize the need of making that aircraft available to the land component commander to face the issues that the land component commander has.

And we stand ready should the president and Congress see fit to fund acquisitions. We stand ready to field those in the Air National Guard and would relish the opportunity to do that, sir.

COCHRAN:

Great, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

INOUE:

Senator Leahy?

LEAHY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad you and Senator Cochran are having this hearing.

And Senator Bond, of course -- he and I co-chair the Guard caucus, and I think that's the reason for all -- everybody up here is part of the Guard and Reserves. We understand that.

And I'm trying to avoid two hats at the same time, but I also have a hearing, the Judiciary Committee, with Director Mueller of the FBI, and I'll be going back and forth there.

General Wyatt. I'm glad to see you here. It's your first time being before us, and I appreciate the time you spent with me yesterday afternoon in going over some of the issues of the Air National Guard.

General Vaughn, this may be your last appearance before this committee, and I want to take the opportunity to publicly applaud for the superb job you've done.

I think the Army Guard's going to be better equipped, better trained, in a better position because of your service, and I think that's service that has been also complemented by the brave men and women in the Guard.

So, General Vaughn, I complement you, sir.

And, General Vaughn, also Senator Bond and I have written to the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs a number of times about the issue of transparency and budgeting equipment for the Reserve components.

We approved, here in Congress, budget requests based on justification, documents that say a certain amount of gear will go to the Guard Reserves. But then when it is going, we don't find where that reference is, as the actual distribution goes about, and no one can actually certify the equipment slated for the Guard and Reserve actually made it to the Guard and Reserve.

How do we -- how do we fix this?

I mean, there ought to be some transparent way that we can say OK, now, we wanted x amount of equipment to go there. It either did or it didn't. And if it didn't, well, then what was the reason?

It may have been a national emergency. It may have been an international emergency, but at least have some reason other than as it is now. Senator Bond and I -- we talked to the guy at the caucus -- we have to, kind of, guess at what happened.

VAUGHN:

Senator Leahy, thanks for your leadership and Senator Bond's on this particular issue.

A lot of people with their shoulder to the wheel, you know, on this one, for a long time, I think, is making a lot of difference. I have a lot of friends inside of the Army, and we're able to argue about things and still come back and be comrades in arms.

And I will tell you that I think that the Army is finally making great strides on this. And I have confidence that they are trying to deliver the equipment.

As I have stated very early on, we made some assumptions. First of all, we went out and tried to get a dollar value of everything that we had received lately. And then we made a guess as to which appropriations it probably came out of.

And then we took up together with the (inaudible) of the Army -- we took a range of 18 to 24 months and said it is likely that it would take this long for this equipment to appear.

Now, if the assumptions, as you well know, are somewhere near right, it appears like we probably got about what we were supposed to get.

The problem is it is not auditable. And (inaudible) I'm sure he will testify later. There will have to be an auditable system in place rather than something that takes the kind of folks to come up with some kind of an answer two or three years later.

LEAHY:

So we do something different in the appropriations process itself to make it easier?

VAUGHN:

Sir, the appropriations process itself -- if we knew how complex it would be to have a separate appropriations for equipment for the Guard and Reserve, I could probably give you a pretty good answer.

The first thing that has to be sorted out, if you had a separate appropriations that went directly toward the Guard and Reserve for this, what else goes with it?

There may be so much burden in that.

And so the first thing I would say is that Army needs to be -- they're on the, they're on the right track now. They've finally got this thing teed up, got everybody's attention, and they're getting at it.

But it's got to be a push a button of some kind to give you and us the auditable results of what happens when the appropriations equipment...

LEAHY:

I may have my staff work with your staff to follow on that, and I appreciate what you're saying about it, equipment going. That's our ultimate goal, because we want to make sure that happens.

And General Wyatt, you and I talked about, if I could brag for just a moment, not that any parochialism ever appears in this committee on our different things, but the 158th fighter wing from Air National Guard's carried out some tremendous air defense missions. I mention that right after 9/11 they did the air cover over New York City.

But Senator Bond and I recently released a GAO report we commissioned on the management of the air defense mission.

It says seven years after 9/11, the Air Force, you have to budget for the air defense mission, even though we see some significant areas where we need that in the foreseeable future.

It mentions what's already been mentioned here about the Air Guard's ability to carry out the mission because of aging aircraft. Some of them are flying some of the oldest aircraft in the Air Force, particularly the F-16s. They're going to be retired before we even see the follow-on.

What can you suggest to us in that area?

WYATT:

A couple of things, Senator. Thank you for the question, and if I may take a little liberty here to explain where I think the Air National Guard is in response to your question.

Modernization of the fleet is one thing, recapitalization of the fleet is another.

For years we have embarked upon modernization, and thanks to the great support of this committee through (inaudible) accounts and some Congressional adds, the Air National Guard has been able to modernize its fleet. Not to the level we need, but when the combatant commanders request a certain capability, they expect the Air National Guard to answer with that capability.

We have a process through our weapons and tactics center that we run with the Air Force Reserve that identifies fleet wide, not just the fighter force, but the lift force, ISR force, all the platforms inside the Air National Guard Air Force Reserve and the Air Force that could use some modernization.

And we put together a bottom up driven process that identifies the capabilities that we need to modernize. And this committee had been very supportive with (inaudible) accounts that help us modernize the force.

But we're getting at the, as the GAO report indicates, and some of the recent articles that I have seen in the "Air Force Times" indicate that, and our own data indicates that we're at that point in time where we need to start looking at recapitalization.

Think of this in contextual themes, if you would, one of those being the GAO report that you just mentioned that, recognizes the resourcing issues that the Air Force has, and its reluctance to fully fund, fully support the Air Sovereignty Alert.

It's still not into the FYDP; it's not into the budget line. It's handled on a two-year by two-year basis. That's one problem.

The other problem is recapitalization, not just of the ASA fleet. We've got to remember that the Air Sovereignty Alert fleet, when it's not flying Air Sovereignty Alert, is participating in AEF rotations. So it's not a specialized fleet. They have a specialized capability, but they can use that in AEF rotations, and they do.

36 percent of the combat sorties flown in Iraq and Afghanistan last year were flown by the Air National Guard.

LEAHY:

With aging equipment?

WYATT:

With again equipment, yes, sir.

Think about the comments that General Renuart, the NORTHCOM commander just issued just a few days ago, "Our ASA posture is a nonnegotiable in the upcoming QDR. I see short to medium term risk in our ASA force structure due to the legacy age out issue." That's what you're talking about.

Secretary Donnelly a couple of weeks ago made the comment, "I look forward to TFI, Total Force Integration, part two." He recognizes the need to leverage the inherent strengths of the three components of the Air Force to efficiently provide the capability that we need in the future.

General Schwartz has said, "With declining resources and increasing demands, we must remember that innovation is still free."

So part of the problem is recapitalizing, but part of the problem is also thinking about a force structure in a way for the three components to work together that maximizes those precious resources that the taxpayer pays for.

LEAHY:

General, I think we're going to probably, coming here and have a lot of conversations on this.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm also going to put it into the record, a couple of other question. One, General Vaughn refers to our mountain division. Colonel Roy reminds that very well probably the upcoming Deployment to Afghanistan.

I wish that this is of more of a personal nature, and I wish you'd take a look at that question. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going back to the director.

INOUE:

Senator Durbin?

DURBIN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the witnesses.

Eight years ago I took up an issue, an issue related to Guard and Reserve activation, and the fact that many private employers across the United States make good on the income and salary of these Guard and Reserve activated soldiers and airmen, others.

It turned out that the largest employer of the Guard and Reserve activated did not. The largest employer, of course, is the federal government.

If a member of the federal workforce was a member of the Guard and Reserve and activated, there was no guarantee or protection that their salary would not diminish. And, in some instances, it did.

We talked a lot about the stress of deployment. In these times we can understand the economic stress.

I offered this for eight years, and lost it every time. I'd pass it in the Senate, big votes, and it'd disappear in conference committee, or there'd be some opposition here and there.

Well, lo and behold, I guess perseverance pays off, and in the omnibus bill it finally passed.

So now the federal government is going to make good on the salaries of activated federal employees, the Guard and Reserve.

I'd like to know if you're aware of this, and if you're involved in helping it work?

VAUGHN:

I'm aware that it was a great action, Senator Durbin.

You know, the great capability of the Guard and Reserve is really warehoused on the back of the employers of the nation. And when they start to let our soldiers and airmen, (inaudible) and marines down, then we've really got a problem.

At the back, we think of almost all of the really tragic circumstances, you know, surrounding suicides, and so forth and so on, you know, fatal relationships. And the key driver, it appears, that happens to be their ability to take care of their families through lost job or opportunity.

And so at every turn, and, in fact, in the next panel, the champion of something across the nation for the Reserve is Jack Stultz. And his program we believe in totally, and we're working that program, but it's going to take everyone to have the employers, to pat them on the back, guide them the right way, and keep this great capability warehoused.

So thank you very much. I am very, very much aware of that.

DURBIN:

Good.

WYATT:

Senator, likewise, I had the privilege about a week ago to appear for General Schwartz, who was involved with the Air Force- Navy war fighter talks, to appear on his behalf in Fairbanks, Alaska, for the Chamber of Commerce Military Appreciation Night, attended by, oh gosh, probably 500 Fairbanksans -- I learned a new term while I was there.

One of the comments that I made referenced the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 that obviously you sponsored, and the relief that that provided our civilian workers.

And the reaction of the crowd was one that you would be proud of. Several employers came up afterwards and said it's nice to know that some of the things that we as private employers have been doing have now been validated by the United States government, and they have seen fit to follow our lead.

So they felt like they were out there. They obviously didn't know how hard you'd worked to get that passed, but it's a huge thing that you did for the Guard.

DURBIN:

I kept telling my colleagues for eight years it was a good idea, but finally we do have it.

Can I also ask you about the Individual Ready Reserve program?

And last week the Department of Defense announced that it was going to end the practice of stop loss. And since 2001, 120,000 service members have been held past their service obligations in that program.

Even today, 13,000 service members who have done their duty, completed their enlistment, are prevented from moving on with their lives.

Secretary Gates says the stop loss practice, quote, "break faith," close quote, with our troops.

The Army still uses IRR soldiers, Individual Ready Reserve, to fill National Guard units that are not at full strength. IRR soldiers have fulfilled their enlistment requirements, but have time remaining on their military service obligations.

They are not paid and do not train well in the IRR, and have moved on with their civilian lives without expectation that they're going to be recalled to active duty except in the most dire situations, like World War III, god forbid.

We have briefings from the Army and believe that the IRR system really needs a close look at this point. Do you believe the end of the stop loss program, General Vaughn, will affect the rate of call up from the Individual Ready Reserve?

VAUGHN:

Senator Durbin, I do not. I think the end of the stop loss, end of stop loss is a great thing.

And I don't want to get out too far in front in releasing how we're going to execute this program.

As you know, my buddy, Jack Stultz, in the Army Reserve, is supposed to move into that one 1 August. We move in at 1 September, and we gladly said we're going to move into it 1 September.

Stop loss for the Guard, and I'll let Jack talk to that Army Reserve piece, obviously, but around 72 percent of those soldiers reenlist down range.

Those on the active side, it's a much different figure.

There will be a bonus that goes with this to stabilize our formations, which is what we need.

The very best thing to stabilize your formations is stop loss. For personnel, for families, maybe that's a very tough thing.

Unfortunately, we had to cross-level a lot when we first started. We had made enormous changes. We don't have to cross-level as much as we did.

We think the use of the IRR in a large sense in our formations is not a good thing. It's not a good thing.

And so, in order to keep from doing that, that's why we went to battle lowering our force structure, taking our end-strength way up over. The chairman asked me a question earlier about the end- strength. That's why we did it is to keep the stop loss thing from happening.

So I hope that gets at those two elements of your question sufficiently.

DURBIN:

So, do you anticipate using IRR? I mean, we have a drawdown of force in Iraq, and I'm trying to get to the bottom line here as to whether or not you think that we're going to make up the difference by discontinuing stop loss and drawing down in Iraq by going to the Individual Ready Reserve more.

VAUGHN:

I think what's going to happen with us, and the economy has probably got something to do with this -- one year out, we're going to look at all those soldiers, that their end-strength is coming up.

And we're going to give them a high unit retention bonus if they stay with us.

And so we'll know at six months whether or not they're going to stay with us.

And we think the cross-leveling piece from within our guard units, because of this bonus opportunity and the chance to get them in the retention window, and our improved strength posture is going to keep us from having to go as deep in the IRR.

There are, as you know, functional areas in the IRR that we're all having trouble with, military intelligence being one of those.

And so there's always going to be some number. I'm telling you from the director of the Army Guard, I'd like to minimize that to nothing.

DURBIN:

Thank you.

Thank you both for your service and for being here today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

INOUE:

Thank you. Senator Bond?

BOND:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Senator Cochran.

And I'd like to begin by welcoming back General Vaughn and welcoming for the first time General Wyatt. It's good to see an adjutant general assume this very important position, and I look forward to working with you on addressing the issues which you've already mentioned.

But first I have to join with my colleague Senator Leahy in noting that this is likely

General Vaughn's last appearance before the committee, and I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize and thank General Vaughn for the exceptional leadership and strategic vision he's provided as the director of the Army National Guard.

He has put the Army Guard in a position of strength and relevance not seen at any time since World War II.

From his very successful recruitment program, the G-RAP, to the visionary agricultural development teams that he and I worked on, to fulfilling the critical equipment shortfalls that we had after Katrina, General Vaughn's leadership has been second to none.

We're grateful, General, for your service and in your debt, and I look forward to working with Senator Leahy and the committee to address the equipment shortfalls and ensuring transparency, as you mentioned.

We must do the latter the ensure the equipment this committee provides, especially for dual mission homeland defense, is, in fact, directed to the Guard for that very purpose.

But now speaking about equipment, regarding the Air National Guard, as General Wyatt has already discussed, I think we can all agree that tactical fighters are a paramount piece of equipment for the Air Guard to fulfill its mission.

From defending the territorial air sovereignty of the U.S. in operation Noble Eagle, to taking out terrorists in Iraq like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi that the Guard got, the Air National Guard provides a paramount mission for our country and at a fraction of the costs to the taxpayer.

But, unfortunately, as I've stated in this committee for several years, the senior Air Force leaders continue to pursue plan a, a fifth generation-only fighter strategy, a strategy, in my view, that not only ignored the current budget constraints, but will disproportionately eviscerate the Air Guard's force structure if left unchanged.

This would, in turn, atrophy the nation's aerospace industrial base, diminish the Air Guard's ability to perform missions abroad, and put the Air Sovereignty Alert mission at significant risk.

General Leahy and General Wyatt -- Senator Leahy and General Wyatt both cited the GAO study on the Air Sovereignty Alert. They concluded, quote, "Given the importance of the capability to deter, attack, and destroy airborne threats to the United States, it's important that the Air Force address current and future requirements with the ASA mission to ensure its long term sustainability.

Further, the Air Force should ensure that it has fighter aircraft available to conduct ASA operations, since the F-15s and the F-16s used for these operations are beginning to reach the end of their useful lives," close quotes.

Now, we all know that the bottom line is that the Air Force has stated the defense of the homeland is their most important mission, but it hasn't done much to demonstrate that it realizes it's an important mission.

As the GAO report stated, the ASA mission must be established as a steady state mission and then put the necessary resources toward fulfilling the mission.

Well, I believe as General McKinley does, and I discussed it with him yesterday, that regardless of what happens with the joint strike fighter, the Air Guard needs an interim bridge to ensure that the Air Force does not become, the Air Guard doesn't become a hollow force.

The Air Guard cannot rely on the F-35 program to provide a sufficient, if any, number of aircraft to address its shortfalls in a timely manner.

Last week the GAO released another report providing an assessment of the F-35 JSF program, highlights of the program. Program costs have increased by \$23 billion since last year alone. Operating costs, which were projected at \$346 billion a few years ago, are now estimated at \$650 billion.

GAO's auditors expect development and procurement costs to increase substantially, and schedule pressure the worst based performance to date.

The report says, quote, "The contractor has extended the manufacturing schedule several times, but (inaudible) test aircraft delivery dates continue to slip. The flight test program has barely begun, but faces substantial risk as design and manufacturing problems continue to cause delays.

If we continue to ignore them and rely on the continued Air Force strategy, the air guard will be eviscerated."

As a high ranking official told me yesterday, you could get three F/A-18s for the current price, which can only go up, of one F-35.

Now, General Wyatt, what's your assessment of the future of the air guard facing these equipment shortfalls?

WYATT:

Senator, thanks for the question.

I share your concerns. I think in answering some of the questions of previous members of the committee, we have laid out the perilous position that the Air National Guard fighter fleet is in.

We have a plan. I don't call it necessarily a plan b. I call it the Air National Guard plan. It's a strategic plan that is based upon a matrix of decision, some of which will be made at levels much higher than me.

When we talk about the national security strategy, defense strategy, military strategy, what the Air Force's role, QDR decisions that come down, budget decisions that we will hope to learn of here in the future.

As you pointed out, the Air Force is on a recapitalization vector that relies entirely on fifth generation fighters. We have worked very well with the air combat command in bringing to their attention that the force most at risk for recapitalization is the Air National Guard fleet, and specifically the ASA fleet that protects the United States of America.

We think that's job one, and we think that's where most of the recapitalization attention should be applied.

We are making progress in promoting our position to ACC, and they have written us in earlier into the fielding plans of the F-35. The F-22, obviously, we would need to get into that.

But, but, I likened this earlier to flying in close formations with the United States Air Force, but there are going to be decision that they won't be able to make.

We are preserving our options to include a fourth generation buy. I have not ruled that out. Obviously, there are some decisions that will be made at a higher level that may require not just the Air National Guard, but also the United States Air Force to consider a fourth generation buy, or a 4.5 generation buy.

That's one of the issues, is the platform, the expense. The other is, regardless of the platform, whether it's F-22, F-35, F-15, F-16, fourth generation, 4.5 generation buys, regardless of the platform, we still need to consider what structure we use.

This is the other half of the plan is we've got to take a look at the structure of the United States Air Force.

Associations are the coin of the realm. It maximizes the efficiencies that all three components bring to the Air Force. It minimizes and, in some cases, eliminates the weak points that those components bring.

When we talk about associations and we talk about platforms, we've got to merge the thought processes together to provide the most capability for the United States, whether that be fifth generation or fourth generation.

Thank you very much, General Wyatt. And I know you were gratified to hear as I was the Chairman say that within the budget constraints we will work to make sure that we have the aircraft necessary for the Guard and its vital missions.

And, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your indulgence. I have a lot more to say about this that I will submit for the record for anybody who missed my initial comments. Thank you, sir.

INOUE:

Thank you. Senator Murray?

MURRAY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Senator Cochran. Thank you both of you for your service and the men and women who serve under you. We really appreciate all they're doing today.

General Vaughn, I wanted to start with you. Since our last hearing, I understand that the National Guard has implemented the new system called blast tracking. You mentioned it a few moments ago. That is the system that I know is meant to help us track and link soldiers to situation where they might have been exposed to an adverse situation like an IED explosion.

I really want to commend you on this effort. I really appreciate what you are doing with this, and I think that efforts like that are really going to help us collect the data so that we have, and make sure we have the resources we need to fully address those men and women who have TBI exposure or PTSD.

And I wanted you to share with this committee a little bit more about the blast tracking system and how it works.

VAUGHN:

Thank you, Senator Murray.

To go back to the last year question that you graciously ask about this, and as I explained this when I finished, you know, we had a soldier behind me say, "Sir, you know, that's me. They don't have the record of the five explosions I was in. That's me."

So I wish I had him testify. It would have been a lot better than me doing it.

Our issue is this. About a year and a half ago we looked at this and said, you know, we've got all these soldiers that are coming back that are not on active duty, and they don't have in their medical records a substantial, annotated injury.

They have been returned to duty, but yet is this an accumulation of effects? All the questions are being asked of this. There was no tracking mechanism.

So, simply, what we wanted to do was put into place a tracking mechanism that if a soldier -- for instance, the unit that I was watching was a route clearance outfit that in their daily business is explosions.

And I saw some really tragic ones at the end of this (inaudible). So I talked to a lot of soldiers that had been returned to duty with it.

And so I looked at this closely and said holy cow, all of these are coming back. All of these soldiers will get off active duty, and they will be wards of the state.

Now, I don't mean wards like indigent. I mean the state will end up having to deal with them.

Now, as you know, my sister (inaudible) the head injury council in Missouri for many years. So I was just battered with all the head injury stuff. And so it's always been on my mind.

And so I thought, what's our role? What the missing link in all this?

And our role was to help, I think, get them on the path if they needed treatment or recovery.

In other words, are they going to come in five days, five months, five years, 15 years,

and where are they going to come to?

Are they going to come to the (inaudible) and if they are, how do we route them into the right state agency?

And when we do, is there a stigma behind this that prevents them, you know, from doing this, or do they have to explain everything?

And the way we envisioned this was an automated database system that was operational in nature that when it happened it was a commander's responsibility to note that this individual was in an incident.

And, by the way, if he or she was hurt badly, they were already in the medical health system.

But if we noted in such a way, and they came back to the state at some point, then you have a mechanism to be able to channel them back onto active duty for treatment or into the VA with a record behind them.

And, oh, by the way, you'd be able to do research on all the data.

What we did is we took about a half million dollars and sent a team down range, and we put together an automated database that was already there, the Army system.

The greatness of this system is, as you well know, you have to have an LOD, a line of duty investigation, you know, before you can get into the system.

And so here is an LOD five or ten years from now going to be. This automated system is the LOD that will always track with them.

Now, where are we? If we commanded and controlled everything down range through the adjutants general, this would not be hard. But once they go overseas in an active duty environment, it gets a little bit tough, because most of those folks are going to come back on active duty, whereas most of (inaudible) are not going to come back on active duty.

So we met with all the personnel officers and the adjutant generals, and those that we command and control, they are doing this. And I think we have 1,700-and-some-odd soldiers today. We'll get the precise numbers for you...

MURRAY:

OK.

VAUGHN:

Are we reaching everybody? No. I met with the surgeon general of the Army and the G-1, and they said we're going to do this. We're not going to wait on everybody to cut an order. We've already told them, because we're different, the Guard and Reserve. Again, they're not on active duty.

And if we don't get this right, we're going to have families that are indigent out here looking for care, and they're still trying to prove what happened to them.

MURRAY:

Right.

VAUGHN:

And so it's an emotional issue, I think, for all of us, and I think we're probably on the right track with this, and it'll get better and better and better.

But I think that we need to get this thing -- you know, I'm getting ready to retire, here, but we need to push this thin over the goal line and have all Army, Navy, Air Force, and marines doing this, because, again, if they get off of active duty, they're coming back to the state. And we've got to figure out, then, that (inaudible)

And it's easy, because of the state interagency level between the adjutant generals working for the governor, there happens to be someone in the interagency over there, on the social services side -- and most of it head injury councils or NTBI councils, or what not, that this data and this linkage will happen seamlessly.

And so that's a long answer, I know. We have done what I think that you asked us to do...

MURRAY:

I really commend you. I think you've made a lot of progress with that.

And it's so important, because many of the soldiers that I've talked to don't even remember that they were close to a blast.

And we also know that the symptoms can appear in vast time frames, sometimes a few days after exposure, sometimes as long as 18 months later. So oftentimes people don't link the even with the adverse effect.

So that's really important, and which leads me to my next question, is about the transferability of the data that you are collecting to the VA so that when soldiers leave active duty that that data follows them.

Are you ensuring that that does go into the system as part of the seamless transition, or how are you doing that?

VAUGHN:

Great question, and the one that needs to be worked because, you know, it's not (inaudible) protected, it's not lockdown. It's an operation tool.

And my thoughts were that we needed an organization at the interagency level, again being the head injury council, that in consultation with the adjutant generals, you know, so that you had a military view of this, we knew which was to move it.

This wasn't competition between V.A. and Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine medical care. This is getting them back on the right track.

I think this record is open to the V.A. I think it's open to the military health care systems. You have to be worked out, but, again, somebody has got to do that, because folks like me are not going to be operating the system.

We'll have to get them over to the right people...

MURRAY:

Right.

VAUGHN:

... and do it in a very caring manner.

MURRAY:

Talking to the V.A. about the system now and making sure it's being transferred, or where's the conversation happening?

VAUGHN:

Ma'am, I'm not talking to the V.A., but I think I have folks working with me that I feel are talking to the V.A.

And, as you know, there is a council on this this afternoon where its being discusses again. And those, you're in the process now bringing the data back and getting to the next stage.

And so any suggestions as we go forward on this -- there needs to be everybody involved in it. I mean, it's not us coming up with some bright idea. I mean, this just needs to be done.

And the Army is solidly behind this. Secretary Geren is a tremendous supporter, as well as the vice chief has seen it. He's all over it. He's got it.

MURRAY:

OK, good. Well, this is something we'll continue to follow with you. I really appreciate your work on it.

I also wanted to ask you -- I have a continuing concern about the backlog of claims for VA disability down in (inaudible)

One of the ways that we tried to speed up the delivery of the V.A. benefits have been through the benefits delivery discharge PDD program, which allows claims to be filed within 180 of discharge, with a goal of providing benefits within 60 days after release or discharge from active duty.

Unfortunately, members of our National Guard and Reserve have no or limited access to the PDD program and aren't able to expedite the processing of their VA claims.

Can either of you talk to me about what members are doing to make sure that our VA

does get them benefits more quickly.

VAUGHN:

Senator, later on, (inaudible) liaison officer and a general officer, you know, over there to work these type of activities.

I think that, I think we're getting better. When we started out down this track, it was like you were out in left field doing the whole thing.

The report that I get says that there's progress on this, but that this is a continued education piece that kind of goes in line with this blast tracking thing.

Well, all the systems were not set up to be advantageous for anyone that had an injury or follow on care.

And when they talk about the seamlessness between the services and what not, that's just not true.

The benefits and the way we fly into the various health care systems is the primary bugaboo on all this.

And, again, I'm stumbling around on the answer, but I'll tell you that we have people engaged with you, with VA, and you heard my answer on the blast tracker. They're key in what we're going to do.

MURRAY:

Yes. General Wyatt?

WYATT:

Senator Murray, I echo the comments of General Vaughn.

The problem on the Air National Guard side is that we're kind of late to the game as far as the blast tracker and the information that we have.

I know that, and I'm going to relate back to my experiences as the adjutant general in Oklahoma. I deployed the 45th infantry brigade combat team to Iraq in 2007, and we did

not have such a program.

I wasn't smart to figure out that we needed the program, but the University of Oklahoma was, and they came forward with an offer out of their pockets to fund baseline studies of our soldiers.

We couldn't make them do that, but we offered that service to them that provided a baseline so that if something happened in theater, at least we would have a baseline to operate from to measure the degree of injury.

The advantage of the blast tracker is that it does that, but it also operationalizes the reporting, which I think is key to the whole situation.

When we try to tie that to benefits, V.A. benefits, when the soldier, airmen, sailor, marine comes home, we still have problems in that at the joint force headquarters of our various states, some of them are resourced rather well to facilitate the integration of those services into not only post mobilization briefings and yellow ribbon reintegration programs, but also before they deploy.

And that's one of the reasons that the Air National Guard needs to get more in tune with what the Army National Guard is doing and to follow their lead, integrate with their program, because the adjutants general, whether they are blue, green, whatever color uniform, are responsible for all of the soldiers and airmen in their formations.

And what I'm hearing for the adjutants general is that they need the flexibility to administer the program within their states. But the need access to the V.A., and it needs to rely upon the strength of the national VA, not necessarily the strength of the state and V. A. programs.

We have a very strong state V.A. program in Oklahoma, but I'm advised that that's not true in a lot of states. And soldier and airmen should not have to rely upon the inequities...

MURRAY:

Where they live, yes.

WYATT:

State V.A. systems to acquire the care that they need.

MURRAY:

So we've made some progress, lots of work left to do, don't take our eye off the ball, right? OK.

General Vaughn, I did want to ask you, since our last hearing, I'm excited that you've established a National Guard youth challenge program in the state of Washington. I had the opportunity to meet a couple of cadets from the program, and I think it's great.

And if you could just give us a quick update on what's happening with that?

VAUGHN:

A tremendous program. And, as you know, you mentioned being excited about it. I think 34 states that we're up to now, there is always a struggle for resources. And so I think that there's probably some language that has to do with making it a little bit easier for the states right now to be involved in this.

I would recommend everybody support that to the maximum they can.

When we look at the great crises that we've had, one of them is the left behind, left out youth of America. We really feel good about what we've been able to do.

The states with the youth challenge and starvation programs for the left out and left behind -- you know, we run one of the nation's largest GED plus programs to get through GEDs and the shift them onto active and where they come back to the Guard and Reserve, active Army. We could care less. We just want to turn them around.

I think there's another piece of this. I think there's a high school piece that we need to be involved in.

And I think that goes to the drop out piece. I think you link great programs. You challenge start base.

But in order to get a high school degree with those folks who dropped out after their sophomore year, and you look at the youth challenge statistics, the number just jumps day after day about all those that make the tragic mistakes and can't carry on with a great life and end up averaging like \$750,000 a piece for incarceration for the rest of their lives. And the percentage is huge.

So it's a staggering problem, and there's great talent out there. And I'm not saying we run social, should run social programs necessarily in the Army guard, but we have got such the outreach here that the loyalty that you see from, for instance, those folks that go through the GED plus program and youth challenge toward our nation and giving everybody a second chance.

I think it's the way we recruit. I think it's a big piece of the educational benefits. I think it's an education piece that we ought to be jumping after.

So am I far for the big youth challenge? Absolutely. And you've seen the tear-jerking things that I have -- we've had folks testify that if you hadn't given us the turnaround I wouldn't be a surgeon today. We actually had that happen two years ago, you know.

So we all need to watch. And I know that the question is loaded...

MURRAY:

(inaudible)

VAUGHN:

And I really appreciate you asking about that.

MURRAY:

It's an absolutely great program, and I want to really commend you for doing that. And we're following it and hoping that we can keep it going as long as we have kids out there who aren't, who need a second chance, which I think will be a long time. So thank you.

One last quick question. In December I sent a letter to the National Guard Bureau. It was signed by all of the congressional delegation of Washington State requesting to have the Hammer Training Center be named the Western Regional Training Center for National Guard and Support Teams and Related Training.

Hammer is a fantastic facility that trains people on everything from weapons of mass destruction to all kinds of things.

And I wondered if you could give the committee or me, if you don't have it today, in writing, an update on Hammer's designation as a national training site. And if you don't

have it, you can get it to me...

VAUGHN:

No, I will have to follow up, because the way it's broken up, Detroit Homeland piece come on General McKinley on this. And you know me, I'm candid enough to try to answer the question, but there are parts that I don't have the data. And we will get it to you.

MURRAY:

If you could get it to me, that would be great. I appreciate it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

INOUE:

All right, thank you very much. And General Vaughn and General Wyatt, on behalf of the committee I thank you for your testimony, and may we through you thank the men and women of the air and Army guard for their service to our country. We thank you very much.

And now we call upon General Stultz, Admiral Debbink, General Bergman, General Stenner to come to forward to present their testimony on the Reserve component.

Gentlemen, thank you for joining us this morning, and may I assure you that your full statement will be made part of the record.

May I now call upon General Stultz?

STULTZ:

Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, Senator Murray, it's an honor to be here.

And, Senator Inouye, I would like to report to you first and go for broke that the 100th (ph) and the 442nd I just visited recently in theater, and they're doing very, very well. It's their second deployment out of the Pacific.

And also sent a task force just recently out to the Pacific to visit their families to make sure we're taking care of them. They were in Guam, Saipan, and Samoa. So the four-four-deuce is doing well, your old regiment, and proud to serve this nation.

Thank you, first of all, from the 204,000 plus Army Reserve soldiers that I represent here today for what you've done for us in terms of your support. Things like the National Guard Reserve equipment account and other appropriation and what your staffers have done for us, working very diligently with us to maintain support for our nation through the Army Reserve.

I've submitted my statement for the record, so I don't want to take up any time there.

But I do want to highlight one thing. The theme that you'll see in the Army Reserve posture statement and us going forward this year is return on investment.

And what we're trying to highlight is what a great return on investment your Army Reserve is for this nation. The dollars that we are given to operate with we value, and we invest them very, very carefully to make sure that we're getting all for our nation.

As you well know, 2009 for the Army is the year of the noncommissioned officer. And today I've got three noncommissioned officers with me, and I'd just ask them to stand.

And it really is to highlight the year of the noncommissioned officer. But for the Army Reserve it really highlights return on investment, return on this investment that we give to this nation.

I'll give you just a couple of tidbits here. Sergeant Jason Ford is here with me. Sergeant Ford is a drill sergeant. He goes and trains basic trainees at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He also deployed for this nation and trained the Iraq Army.

While on patrol leading 25 Iraqis, and he was the only American in charge, came under attack and suffered wounds and was awarded the Purple Heart along with the Bronze Star.

But when Sergeant Ford finishes his tour in Iraq, he comes back home to (inaudible) Massachusetts, where he is a policeman. That's a return on investment for this nation. That's taking capability that we're building that we provide for our military in uniform what we bring back to the communities of America and put it back into our communities.

Sergeant Henry (inaudible) He's a diesel mechanic, works for the government. Also deployed to Iraq, and while there, his son, who happened to be part of 32 Striker from Fort Louis, was wounded.

Sergeant (inaudible) maintained his mission even though he had the concerns about his own son, and then comes back to American and goes back to work for this government as a diesel mechanism.

What a great investment we've got.

We've got to do all we can to retain these great NCOs. This is the core. This is what distinguishes the American Army from any other Army in the world, our noncommissioned officer corps.

So I look forward to your questions. I thank you for your support. It's because of what you do for us that we are able to man America's Army with great NCOs like these individuals, as well as bring them back to America's communities. I look forward to your questions, sir.

(APPLAUSE)

INOUE:

May I now call upon Admiral Dirk Debbink?

DEBBINK:

Chairman Inouye, Vice Chairman Cochran, pleasure to be with you this morning. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you.

As you know this is my first testimony before the committee. I'd like to begin by thanking you for your terrific support of the 67,217 sailors and their families that comprise your Navy Reserve.

I'd like to communicate three things to you in my testimony today. First and foremost, my written testimony goes into some length describing what we are doing for our Navy (inaudible) and, by extension, our nation.

As I testify this morning, Navy Reserve sailors are operating in every corner of the world. And you see our sailors in the news, but you don't see the caption that reads "Reserve," because we are part of the total force and seeking to optimize the way we operate as a total force Navy.

From certifying strike groups at home before they deploy overseas to our naval special

warfare teams in Iraq Afghanistan, and around the world, our sailors are making significant contributions across the full spectrum of both naval and joint operations.

And we are very closely linked with our active component and our civilians to constitute the total force that our Navy depends on every day to execute our maritime strategy and national tasking.

Secondly, I'd like to tell you more about the outstanding sailors who are actually doing the work of our Navy Reserve.

Following a strength reduction of nearly 25 percent since 2003, our central focus of our manpower strategy is now to establish a true continuum of service culture. This is a culture that offers our sailors the opportunity to truly be a sailor for life, providing a life-work balance that accommodates individual circumstances while also sustaining the inventory of skilled and experienced professionals we need for our total force missions.

And, finally, like a bridge from what we are doing and whose doing it to communicate what I believe is a real value proposition of any reserve. We are proud of what we bring to the fight today.

We're also acutely aware of the necessity of our long-term contribution to our navy and our nation. And I believe we are demonstrating that daily by the incredible return on investment that your Navy Reserve represents.

Today's Navy Reserve from civil affair to Navy Seals and going to build a total force, and we stand shoulder to shoulder with our active component, executing full spectrum operations that represent every facet of Navy's global maritime strategy for the 21st century.

We have proven ourselves to be a ready, responsive, and adaptive operational force while maintaining our strategic depth.

This is an important and, I think, very meaningful time for all of us to be serving our nation's defense, and particularly as a reservist.

I thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to your questions, sir.

INOUE:

Thank you very much, Admiral.

Now may I call upon General Bergman?

BERGMAN:

Good morning Chairman Inouye, Vice Chairman Cochran.

First, thank you to you and all the members of the committee for your continued support, your continued strong support, because without it the Marine Corps Reserve's ability to sustain capability, war fighting capability in the longest call up of Reserve and Guard units in the history of the nation, it's made a big difference.

Your support has made the Marine Corps Reserve the ready and relevant fighting force that it is today.

During the past several years, a basic underlying change has occurred. Instead of being a strategic reserve, we are now largely in the Marine Corps an operational reserve. About 80 percent of our drilling Reservists are unit-based, and that makes up our operational reserve.

As that unit-based force, we have implemented the force generation model. This model creates maximum predictability, predictability for everyone, predictability for the Marines, for their families, for their employers, and for our active component as we work on the ever complex issues of force flow and who goes in what rotation, predictability for manning, equipping, training, all of which are tied to budgeting.

The force generation model is now just beginning to allow us to plan for a five year, well-budgeted, highly effective training dwell time for our units.

I would suggest to you that there's nothing more adaptable than a marine in a fight. Our force generation model has enabled us to transition to that highly adaptable operational reserve.

However, because of recent Marine Corps focus on building the active component to 202,000, which we have successfully done, and we'll be two years ahead of schedule here by the end of this fiscal year, some of the manpower planning and policies that were focused on the active component are just now beginning to be refocused to ensure that this transition from the strategic to the operation reserve is effectively planned for and effectively implemented.

I look forward to your questions.

INOUE:

Thank you very much.

General Stenner?

STENNER:

Chairman Inouye and Vice Chairman Cochran, Senator Murray, I'm very, very happy to be here today on behalf of the Air Force Reserve and the Air Force Reserve Command.

And before I go any farther, I would like to tell you that I'm joined today by my command chief, our Chief Master Sergeant Troy Macintosh, who is the senior ranking enlisted member of that very, very powerful and strong backbone that we have as an Air Force Reserve, that enlisted force.

And I'm pleased that he's been around to help me as we move through the transitions that we've been making and keep us strong in that regard. So thank you very much, chief, for being here.

I also have to say thank you, as have the rest of my compatriots, for all of the things that this appropriations committee has done for us as far as Air Force Reserve.

The fact that we are, in fact, able to provide 14 percent of this nation's Air Force, total Air Force, for just a little over 5 percent of that budget is a very cost effective way to deliver that capability that the combatant commanders need.

I believe that we are in fact funded appropriately to be that tier one force that can join our two component partners in the Guard and the active-duty regular Air Force to seamlessly provide that capability, as we are showing on a daily basis.

Whether it's deployed or whether it's in place at the home station and the capability we provide from home station is sometimes a little bit unnoticed as well, because we do fight in place with our mobility forces and our state's forces and our cyber forces, our ICBM forces, et cetera, all of which we play a part in as a three component Air Force.

I will tell you also that the modernization that has happened, our Air Force is modernizing and recapitalizing, and the degree of dollars have been well used to take the equipment that we have and get it into the fight earlier, quicker, along with our guard and active component partners.

My priorities, and I'm on the record as to how we're about to do business and continue to do business, are to be cognizant of the fact that we are first and foremost a strategic reserve, which I believe we are leveraging on a daily basis, to provide that operational capability and be that operational force that we around the world today.

And we will continue to do that and retain and recruit the best and the brightest.

And as a Reserve, we are able to be everywhere that we need to be, and move folks to and from, grow where we need to, where the new capabilities are, and then adjust what we need to do in that capabilities both in the unit world and in that very unique individual mobilization augmentee world that we have as well, bringing, again a dramatic capability to the Air Force.

The kind that's required and the manpower that we have that we will do with the new mission sets that are coming in, the unmanned aerial systems, the intelligence surveillance reconnaissance with our nuclear fleet of bombers, all of those things are part and parcel of what we as an Air Force Reserve do as part of the that three component Air Force.

And we are very, very proud of the 67,400 men and women that are around the world today doing what the nation needs us to do, and we look forward to your question about how we can do that better.

Thank you, sir.

INOUE:

Thank you very much.

I'd like to be asking questions. In the F.Y. 2008 Defense Authorization Act, Defense Department was directed to establish a centralized office for the yellow ribbon reintegration program.

Now, some have questioned the wisdom of this. I'd like to get your thoughts on this -- General Stultz?

STULTZ:

Yes, sir. I think the, my candid assessment on that, it probably slowed down the process for us to implement the yellow-ribbon program, because any time we try to bring all the

services together and gain some kind of consensus of how we're going to implement something, it takes a long time.

And I think what we came to agreement on is we cannot apply a cookie cutter approach. Each service is different in terms of the way we mobilize and deploy soldiers, in terms of the length of time we deploy them, and to what they're exposed to during those deployments.

And so at the end of the day, we came back and said, we let each service sort of design its own implementation plan. So I think we slowed down part of the implementation by going through that process.

At the same time, I will say when you do raise it to that level, to the OSD level, you get buy-in as a department that this is not just a program we're to the services and say "You figure it out," it's something that Congress has mandated this to us, and at the OSD level, we're going to fund it, we're going to buy into it, fund it, and make sure it gets implemented properly.

From the Army Reserve's perspective, we've already conducted 70 of the programmed events this year. We're well on our way. We've got another 70 or so already scheduled.

The challenge we're finding with the yellow-ribbon program is the difficulty in trying to bring a dispersed force back together.

Unlike an active-duty force where everybody comes back home to Fort Hood and you can go through a reintegration process there at Fort Hood, for the Army Reserve, because our units are geographically dispersed, you may have a soldier who lives three states away from the unit, and he's willing to travel, a lot of times at his own expense, to be part of that unit, but when we come back for a yellow ribbon event and we try to engage the families, it makes it tough.

One approach that was developed was to say, OK, let's have a regional approach. Let's have geographic events, and that way soldiers can choose where to go to the reintegration event based on their geography.

I have an issue with that. And I've told my commanders that, because I think it's imperative that we bring soldiers back together as a unit, and we look the soldiers in the eye and put them that reintegration together as a unit.

If you took me and said, you go somewhere off to an event that's not part of your unit, and go sit in a corner and sit there, and nobody else knows who I am there, they're going to say, well, he's just a quiet guy.

If I go and do the same thing with my unit, they're going to say something's wrong with Jack; he needs help, because he's not himself.

And so it's imperative, if we implement a yellow-ribbon program properly, it's a unit-based program, and the exceptions are where we have to disperse geographic -- we'll always have exceptions.

Of particular concern to me on yellow ribbon is the IRR, the Individual Ready Reserve. We don't really have a yellow-ribbon program for them, in my opinion.

I get occasionally, not very often, an IRR soldier that's assigned to the Army Reserve. It's my, I think, obligation to take care of that soldier and his family with the yellow-ribbon program. Even though the unit may be from Pennsylvania and he goes back to Texas, I've got to figure out how to get him the reintegration he needs back in Texas.

But I just get a very small piece of the IRR. Most of the IRR are filling active duty units. And when that unit comes back to Fort Hood and that soldier goes back to Pennsylvania, nobody looks out for him.

I've raised this at the vice chief and the chief staff level to say we've got to figure out how to do yellow ribbon for IRR soldiers as well as my active reserve soldiers.

I think it's a great program, sir. I appreciate the funding we've gotten for that.

I think we're still learning as to the best way to implement it, and we've been a little bit slow to get there.

INOUE:

Admiral, any thoughts on this?

DEBBINK:

Sure, Chairman.

The yellow-ribbon program has been instrumental in the Navy Reserve to helping us really propel our returning warrior workshops as our main program forward with the funding that came with it.

It's been a very successful program. it's done on weekends, not because it's Reserve program, but because that when we can get the spouses there to, which is also very important to us, because it is a reintegration event, and you want to bring the members back together who served, as well as the families.

The other thing we've done is employed the funds from yellow ribbon to deploy psychological health outreach coordinators to each of our regions, and they've been instrumental as well, staying in touch with our sailors, particularly those who might be at risk for psychological health reasons, and have had a couple of great news stories of interventions of possible suicides.

So we have been very pleased with the funding. It's been very instrument to our programs.

INOUE:

Thank you. And General Bergman?

BERGMAN:

Yes, sir.

General Stultz articulated it very, very well. I will just add to the fact that the unit-based approach, because these marines in that unit know the other marines. They know who's in distress quicker than if you just show up at an individual event by yourself. That has paid dividends.

Number two, mobilization command, which is the Marine Corps' element in charge of managing the IRR, has been a great asset in ensuring that, at least to the 80 percent level, we maintain some level of in touch capability with those IRR members regardless of whether they went to an active component unit or whether they came to a reserve unit, that they are included.

And as Admiral Debbink said, the Marine Corps also utilizes a psychological health outreach program that has been established for us. We are in the process of building the 32 teams across the country which will be comprised of about four mental-health professional each that will allow us to ensure that we dig a little deeper each time.

So we appreciate the continued funding and support.

INOUE:

Thank you. General Stenner?

STENNER:

Mr. Chairman, thanks.

I do agree with just about everything that has been said as far as units. We would love to be able to deploy as a unit, we'd love to be able to reintegrate and take a look at everybody as they come on home at the 30, 90, 180 day point as a unit.

We are, however, also involved with our individual mobilization augmentees, who do regularly deploy, so we are reintegrating them as well.

Some of the things that the program has done regardless of the implementation, has certainly raised the awareness of what is out there, what is necessary, and how we might go about doing this.

And as an example, I was at Youngstown, Ohio, a couple of weeks ago, and they had a wonderful yellow-ribbon program event that brought a security forces squadron back together and their families, and it was a wonderful time for all.

Across the river in Pennsylvania two weeks earlier, at Pittsburgh, they had had a similar event, their first, and that two unit being in proximity has, in fact, generated some great discussion, and they are going to share assets, will be able to share resources, will be able, as an example, use the time that they're having at one location to have other folks come over if they can't make it somewhere else.

We are looking at all those kinds of locations to put our IMAs, who also need to be understood and taken care of as well, as well as the IRR.

And I think that one of the best things that we can do right now, if we can get a database to show us where this things are, it's up to each of us as commanders and unit equipped members to figure out how best to monitor and watch and get all of our folks regardless of unit, IMA, IRR, reintegrated appropriately and monitored carefully.

So we're working together with our service partners to do that as well.

Thank you, sir.

INOUE:

Thank you.

General Stultz, you have implemented an employer partnership program? How is that working?

STULTZ:

Yes, sir. It's probably been about a year and a half ago we started really looking seriously at it. If we're going to sustain the up tempo we have with our Army Reserve force, we've got to have the employers. I've got to have soldiers who have the confidence that they can have a civilian career and be in the Army Reserve.

And that led us into discussions with employers to sit down and talk about how we're going to work together to make sure we've got their support.

What we found is that the employers of America have the same challenge we have in the military, and that's finding the talent, not the workers, the talent that they need to run good corporations or good industry in America.

And so rather than having the discussion about what's going to happen when I take workers away from those employers to be soldiers for me, I said we ought to be having a discussion, let me bring soldiers to you to be workers for you, because I've got great talent in my rank. These three individuals that I introduced earlier represent that.

And what we found is that there is a natural synergy where we have in the Army Reserve, because we're combat support, service support, the same skill sets in our ranks that American industry is looking for.

We have truck drivers. The American Truckers' Association said they were desperately short of long haul truck drivers in America.

We have medical technologists. America's medical centers said that we are desperately short of medical technologists, respiratory, X-ray, surgical E.R.

Law enforcement -- we have military police, a lot of law enforcement agency to include right here in the District of Columbia said we're desperate short of law enforcement.

And it goes on and on and on.

And so we started this initiative called the Employer Partnership where we basically said let the Army Reserve become a reservoir of talent to help populate America's industry.

Let's develop a human capital strategy where I can go recruit a soldier to be a medical technologist for me and one of my Army Reserve hospitals on the battlefield in Balad, but when they come home, they'll come to work for you here at a Nova Healthcare Center in Northern Virginia.

And so we started signing agreements where we say we'll go help you. We'll find the talent.

And as word got out, it just kind of snowballed.

To date we have 225 companies that have come to us and said we want to sign up with the Army Reserve to be partners with you. We've got probably another hundred that are on a waiting list.

The recognition is when we bring an Army Reserve, and I would just say not Army Reserve, it's Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, National Guard Air Reserve, whatever, it comes to work for us.

These industries tell us it's a different individual, difference work ethic. They understand leadership, they understand teamwork, they understand responsibility. They're drug free. They're physically fit. They have an aptitude.

And so it's very, very positive.

I was just a few ago in Kosovo visiting one of my units, and a sergeant came up and said "Sir, I wasn't sure what I was going to do when I got home. But I went on the Army Reserve Employer Partnership Web site. I have three offers now for a job when I get home."

So it's very, very encouraging.

We're still in the infant stages of how we properly implement this to match the talent and then expand it across all the services that are represented here.

But it is very, very successful to date, and we've got companies, everything from Joe's Garage in Slidell, Louisiana, to General Electric, which has 300,000 employees around

the world, and Wal-Mart, or somebody like that.

So it spans the spectrum in terms of employers that really are reaching out and say we want to engage with the talent that you bring us.

INOUE:

Congratulations.

STULTZ:

Thank you, sir.

INOUE:

Do the other Reserve components have similar programs?

STENNER:

Sir, I will tell you that one of the most valuable resources that we deal with as far as an Air Force Reserve is that rated crew member that generally has a civilian job as an airline participant one way or the other, whether it's a pilot or some kind of another capacity.

So right now, to share that resource, to understand how we use them and where we can leverage the talents that come from the Air Force Reserve, we're working with the airline transport association to see how we can, in fact, deploy our folks, get them back, get that talent where it needs to be.

And we bring in folks that the airlines would like to have for exactly the same reasons that General Stultz is talking about, and I think that we're leveraging that, at least in that capacity right now, and I'll emulate his program. it sounds like it's a good one.

Thank you, sir.

INOUE:

Admiral?

DEBBINK:

Chairman, I'd offer that we are triply excited about the program that the Army Reserve has put in place, and the four of us plus the National Guard chiefs as well get together on a monthly basis and share these stories.

And so we're eager as this program continues, to see how we can piggy back on it.

In the meantime, I think one of the very important programs that we are all very supportive of that has been a long-standing program in a similar vein is the employer support of the Garden Reserve, and using that as a very important outreach to the employers that really are the third leg of the stool that we all rely upon -- the service member, the family, and the employer.

INOUE:

General Bergman?

BERGMAN:

Sir, back when General Jones was commenting on, in around a 1999, 2000 timeframe, the Marine Corps implemented the Marine for Life program, which put drilling Marine Reservists, some active duty, some at a drilling reserve status around the country to facilitate reintegration into the communities for the marines coming back, whether it be through helping them find jobs, connect with employers, or just in general re-assimilating back into their community.

Our program is not anywhere near as evolved as the Army's, but, nonetheless, for the last eight-plus years, it has been serving on a smaller level.

So I applaud the Army Reserve and General Stultz for what they've done, because they really have become the model for all of us.

INOUE:

Thank you very much.

Senator Cochran?

COCHRAN:

Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to raise one issue.

I noticed in the Army's report it talks about meeting homeland defense and disaster relief missions and how you need to maintain a training level and equipment status in order to make that counter contribution.

I was just curious to know whether in hurricane Katrina you had experiences in helping to provide assistance to the victims of that terrible tragedy.

STULTZ:

Yes, sir, very much so.

A lot of those CH-47 helicopters you saw picking people up off the roofs or dropping sandbags into the dikes were Army Reserve helicopters that we sent down there.

A lot of the truck that you saw bringing in bottled water and other medical supplies and everything were Army Reserve trucks that we dispatched down there to that location.

Some of the engineers that were down there working hand in hand with the Guard folds were Army Reserve engineers.

The challenge we've got is I had no authority to do that, because it had not been declared a federal disaster at that point.

Knowing that my counterparts in the National Guard and all, as well as my own soldiers and their families who lived in Mississippi, Louisiana, and that area, were suffering, we said we can't wait. We've got to go ahead and get the help down there.

You know, we went through this in hurricane Andrew when I was in Florida, and the question from some of the Guard folks there were how come were driving past Army Reserve equipment that could be helping us.

And we said, but we don't have the authority yet to put that equipment into the operation.

What I did is I put them annual training. I'm authorized to do annual training every year, and so I said OK, this is going to be a training exercise for you guys. Get down to Louisiana, get those helicopters down there, get everything down there, and eventually we'll get you into a proper status, but we can't wait.

What we have said, and the Office of Secretary of Defense has taken it on as far as legislative initiative, we need to put some kind of authority in place for call ups of Title 10 forces for homeland emergencies other than just the one we have now, which is for weapons of mass destruction.

But we have a lot of resources populated around America that are ideal for these homeland-type missions, but, again, because of the way the laws are written, and the Title 32 status for the National Guard being responsive, but it's still state response, even though I've got units sitting there available, they can't be utilized.

That's what I'm pushing for, is we've got to change the law to be able to say let's be able to utilize the Marine Corps Reserve, the Navy Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Air Reserve in homeland missions, and give us the authority to put these people on order on short notice.

COCHRAN:

I wonder if any of the other services have had similar experiences, maybe not with hurricane Katrina. General Stenner?

STENNER:

Yes, sir. Thank you very much for that question, because it is, in fact, germane to, I think, all of the services here as our Title 10 Reserve status puts us in that predicament.

But we have had -- our combat search and rescue helicopters have been very much involved in almost every one of these kind of disasters.

We know that our spray mission at Youngstown, Ohio, is going to be called upon almost immediately afterwards to start making sure that we don't have those infestations that we've had with the bugs and the disease.

We know that our life capacity is going to be just as essential as anything else that's in there as the supplies continue to get to where they need to be.

So all of those things that we have gone out of our way to make sure they are positioned as far as we can take them before we have the authorities to get them into the fight.

So we'll bring them from all over the country, pre-positioned and pre-staged, with our component Air Force, and coordinate within house as far as we can go, to the point of what General Stultz said, and put them on an appropriate order to get the job done until we can get the rest of authorities in place.

So I have the same issues. I have the same, I think, requirements in what we can do as force services would be wonderful.

COCHRAN:

Thank you. General Bergman?

BERGMAN:

Yes, sir. Well, as I'm sure your very well aware of, our amphibious assault vehicles headquartered in Gulf Port were out swimming literally before Katrina had moved all the way through, doing life-saving kinds of missions, and continued to do that throughout as necessary.

We had also in advance from both the east and the west pre-positioned some long-haul vehicles to a point, let's say, somewhere between their station of assignment and the central Gulf Coast are in anticipation of a potential event.

We were as prepared as we could be, but, more importantly, the lesson learned from that that I think paid dividends, let's say, in hurricane Ike, was the fact that, for example, the advanced coordination between the local community and the local governments with our Reserve unit there in Galveston, allowed for a clearer understanding of who was going to do what, who had the capabilities to do what.

In other words, don't count on us, because we're probably going to be evacuated. We'll be coming back from a difference direction.

So, again, in echoing what General Stultz has said, the need for ongoing dialogue to understand in our region of the country, and, I would suggest to you, every region, but we just happened to have a defined hurricane season every year that allows us to preplan for, the lesson learned from Katrina and from follow-on hurricanes has helped us to become better prepared.

COCHRAN:

Admiral Debbink?

DEBBINK:

Yes, sir. I offer our example would be the California wildfires last year, where HSE-85, our reserve helicopter squadron, worked through our regional organization there, Navy region southwest, to provide support.

In addition, again using this total force look at things, one of our Navy Reservists, actually his home, their home was threatened by the fire, and Navy region southwest, the active component relocated that sailor.

So the way we see it is employing it though our total force, and it's working pretty well for us.

COCHRAN:

Thank you very much for the contributions you've made to not only our national security interests in terms of traditional military activities, but some of these other events that are just as important and can be just as deadly.

Thank you very much for your service.

INOUE:

General Stultz, Admiral Debbink, General Bergman, General Stenner, we thank you very much for your testimony and for your vision and for your wisdom, and through you, may we thank the men and women in your Reserve components for their service to our country.

The Defense Subcommittee will meet next on Tuesday, April 22, 10:30 a.m., at which time we will receive testimony from Secretary Michael Donnelly and General Norman Schwartz on the United States Air Force F.Y. 2010 budget request.

Until then, we'll stand in recess.

CQ Transcriptions, March 25, 2009

List of Panel Members and Witnesses

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WITNESSES:

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LT. GEN. HARRY WYATT III, DIRECTOR , AIR NATIONAL GUARD

LT. GEN. JACK STULTZ, CHIEF, ARMY RESERVE

VICE. ADM. DIRK DEBBINK, CHIEF, NAVAL RESERVE

LT. GEN. JOHN BERGMAN, COMMANDER, MARINE FORCES RESERVE

LT. GEN. CHARLES STENNER JR., CHIEF, AIR FORCE RESERVE

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